

The Tabernacle in the Wilderness

by

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CHAPTER FIVE

The Table of Shewbread

TURN IN YOUR BIBLES, PLEASE, TO LEVITICUS, CHAPTER 24, beginning at the fifth verse. Pray with me today that many will find JESUS, the Bread of Life, and be sustained in this pilgrimage journey.

FURNITURE ARRANGED LIKE A CROSS

There were in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness six articles of furniture.

In the outer court, there were the Brazen Altar and the Laver; in the Tabernacle proper (the Holy Place) there were the Table of Shewbread, the Golden Candlestick, and the Altar of Incense; and in the Holy of Holies there was the Ark of the Covenant, covered by the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat.

Now with your chart before you, please notice that these articles of furniture are placed in the form of a cross. [46]

The centerpiece of the cross is seen in the straight line extending from the Brazen Altar through the Laver and Altar of Incense to the Ark of the Covenant. The two arms of the cross are the Golden Candlestick and the Table of Shewbread. JESUS said, "**I am the bread of life . . . I am the light of the world . . .**" (John 6:35; 8:12), and we may think of the bread and light needed by a spiritually hungry and darkened world as extending outward from the two arms of this cross.

THE PLACE OF FELLOWSHIP

Today, let us consider briefly the Table of Shew bread.

It is also called the Table of the "*bread of faces*," a figure of speech representing the presence of

the Lord. Hence, the bread on this Table is also designated the "*present bread*" or the "*presence bread*."

Let us notice the way, according to the plan of the Tabernacle, that a sinful man must come if he is to have fellowship with the holy GOD.

Let me drive home to you the fact that man must come GOD's way; all other ways are useless.

First of all, he must come to the Cross of CHRIST, represented by the Brazen Altar. Here, repentant man is reconciled to GOD on the basis of the death and shed blood of CHRIST, the innocent substitute Who died in his place.

Then, after he has been justified by faith in CHRIST Who bore His sins, he must allow the sins that crop up in his life from day to day to be cleansed away by the Word of GOD. [47]

This cleansing by the water of the Word is represented by the Laver, where the priests had to cleanse their hands and feet daily before they could enter the Holy Place and partake of the bread of presence. So, likewise, we who have had our sins forgiven at the Cross must confess our sins, as they are exposed by the Word of GOD, so that we may maintain continuous fellowship with the holy GOD.

How well I remember when a young lad on an orange ranch, that around noontime Mother would call me in from work or play and say, "Charlie, dinner is ready, so come on in after you have washed your hands and face."

Well, one day I was really hungry, so I just gave my hands and face a quick rinse. Then I went in and sat down at the table, even though I knew I had not done a thorough job. But though I was a member of the family, though I was born into that family, Mother's sharp eye saw my unclean condition, and she would not let me have fellowship at that table. She took me by the ear and marched me out to the wash basin and saw to it that my hands and face were really polished. Then, and not until then, was I permitted to fellowship at the table where I could eat that good home-cooked food that old-fashioned homemade bread that only Mother could make. I'd like to have a loaf right now! [48]

Now the Table of Shewbread speaks of fellowship with GOD, just as a dinner table suggests fellowship with our friends.

When we desire to know a friend a little more intimately, when we desire to discuss matters of mutual concern and interest, the thing we naturally do is to invite that friend to dinner - to break bread with us. So, with this Table of Shewbread, GOD takes the things with which we are familiar to teach us spiritual things.

GOD and His Son JESUS CHRIST long to have fellowship with their blood-bought, redeemed children. And we who are privileged to be children of GOD through faith in CHRIST should have as our chief desire that of coming to an increasingly more intimate fellowship with GOD and CHRIST.

David said, "**As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so pants my soul after thee, O God**" (Psalm 42:1).

And Paul, though he had experienced glorious success in preaching the Gospel, said, as he sat in a dark Roman prison, that he counted all things but loss in comparison with the glory of having fellowship with CHRIST! (Philippians 3:9, 10).

GOD has provided the means whereby we may satisfy this desire of ours to know Him better.

As Israel in the Old Testament days, through the God-appointed priests, had fellowship with GOD at the Table of Shewbread, so in New Testament times, we who are true children of GOD can have fellowship with GOD through His Word, the written Bread of Life, and through CHRIST, the Living Bread of Life. [49]

CHRIST said, " . . . **I am the bread of life . . . the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life**" (John 6:35, 63).

And Peter, seeking the fellowship of GOD, said to CHRIST, " . . . **To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life**" (John 6:68).

THE SHEWBREAD

Now in Leviticus 24:5-10, we read the instructions concerning the way the loaves of shewbread were made.

According to verse 5, fine flour had to be taken.

That means that wheat had to be harvested, then separated from the chaff at the threshing floor, and finally ground at the mill before it could be the fine flour required for the shewbread.

So our Lord JESUS CHRIST, the God-appointed wheat, was cut down, sifted by suffering, ground and bruised fine in the mill of GOD's judgment against sin so that he might become the bread of GOD's presence, the shewbread, pure and holy before GOD and man.

Fine flour means no unevenness, no lumps, no coarseness, and so it suggests the sinlessness of CHRIST.

Even His enemies testified of His sinlessness.

- Pilate said, " . . . **I find no fault in this man**" (Luke 23:4).
- Pilate's wife said, " . . . **Have nothing to do with that just man . . .** " (Matthew 27:19).
- Judas Iscariot said, " . . . **I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood**" (Matthew 27:4).
- The centurion said, " . . . **Surely this was a righteous man**" (Luke 23:47). [50]

CONDITIONS FOR FELLOWSHIP

Continuing on with verse 5 and into verse 6 we read, " . . . **bake twelve cakes thereof: two-tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row.**"

Each of these twelve cakes represented a tribe of the children of Israel.

The same amount of flour was used in each cake, and they were arranged in an orderly, symmetrical pattern on the Table.

As represented on the Table, no tribe could think of itself as superior or separate from the other tribes.

This brings home to us the powerful truth that we cannot hope to have fellowship with a holy GOD unless we have our hearts cleansed from all bitterness, pride, and enmity against a Christian brother. To have fellowship and communion with GOD, we must be one with the family of GOD.

But reading on in verse 6, we discern another condition that must be met if we are to have fellowship with GOD.

These loaves are to be set upon the pure Table before the Lord.

How incongruous for anyone who was impure to come to such a Table and expect to have fellowship with the holy GOD! [51]

Now, keeping these facts in mind, turn to I Corinthians, where we see a specific New Testament application of these truths pictured in the Table of Shewbread.

According to I Corinthians 6:11, the church at Corinth was composed of members who had been washed, sanctified, and justified in CHRIST. However, dissensions and strife had arisen because these people began to look more to their human leaders than to CHRIST. Along with these dissensions, sins of the flesh, such as fornication, had been permitted amongst the members without any steps being taken by the Church to discipline the offenders.

Therefore, Paul stresses the necessity for believers to understand that they are one with one another.

He says in 1 Corinthians 10:16, "**The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? . . . For we being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.**"

One loaf - Oh Brother, listen to me, listen to me: in GOD's sight there's but one body, one loaf, and that loaf has been brought together by tribulation, by being ground fine, by the suffering through which each believer must go. Since we who are blood-bought, redeemed children of GOD are one in CHRIST, we are to have a communion with GOD at the Table of Shewbread which is free from all enmity and bitterness toward those who are likewise fellow-heirs with CHRIST. [52]

When you come by the Brazen Altar, by the Laver, to the Table of Shewbread, there to be in GOD's presence, do you come with an unforgiving spirit?

Do you come with bitterness in your heart - with hatred, jealousy, with sins of the flesh?

First, cleanse your heart of all these things; have love in your heart toward your brother, and then you will be ready for fellowship at GOD's Table.

This is where so many Christians fail - and it is so very important!

Again, Paul says to the Corinthians, **"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, . . . eateth and drinketh condemnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body"** (I Corinthians II :26-29).

Thus, let everyone examine himself before partaking of communion, and let the Lord point out all the things that are displeasing to Him. Then, if we confess our sins, we know GOD is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9). Thus, " . . . **If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin**" (I John 1:7).

Where are you, my friend?

Are you still at the Cross, saved as though by fire? Let's leave the first principles of repentance and go beyond the Laver into the Holy Place, and there sit at the Table in fellowship with Him, feasting upon Him, and at rest with Him. How we do need His fellowship and His rest - as we travel on this wilderness journey. [53]

We can have it if we will press on, beyond the Brazen Altar.

Will you do that today, fellow believer? [54]

~ end of chapter 5 ~

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